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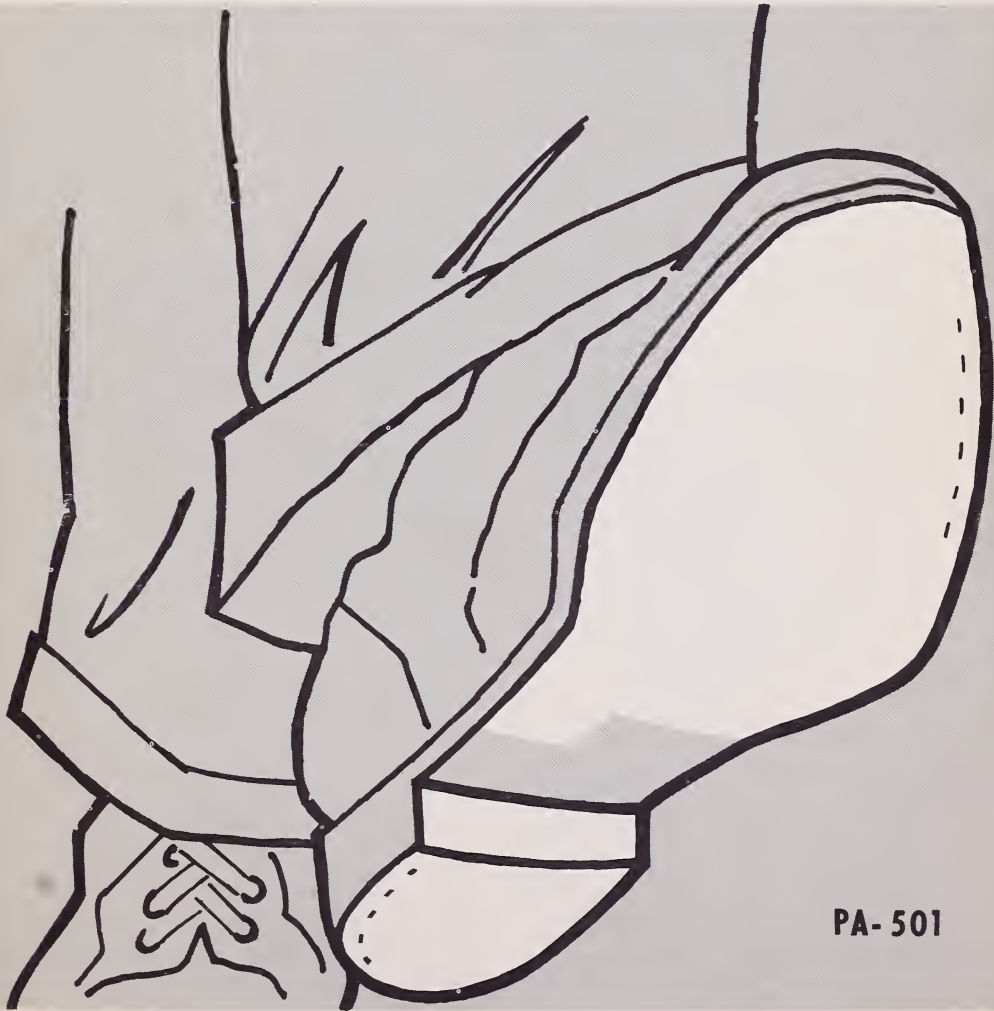
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**Soil Conservation Is Easy
If You Do It With a Plan**

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ONE STEP AT A TIME



PA- 501

Soil Conservation Is Easy If You Do It With a Plan

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Work is always easier when
—we enjoy doing it
—we treat it as a challenge
—we break big jobs into little jobs.
That's the way it is with soil and water conservation.

It's easy to become a successful conservation farmer. You don't have to upset your entire operation. Take it one step at a time. In fact, it's better to do it that way provided you work toward the goal of a conservation plan that is best for you and for the land.

A man learns to crawl before he

learns to walk and learns to walk before he learns to run. The same is true in soil and water conservation. We can reach our goal by taking just one step at a time if

- we know the best place to start and what really pays off
- we adopt practices that need doing first and that will fit right into a good conservation plan
- we don't fool ourselves into thinking we are doing a complete job of conservation after we've adopted a few conservation practices.

Step 1—Show Your Interest Where It Counts

If you really want to conserve your soil, you have all it takes to make a



start. It's just a matter of letting the right people know you're interested and getting the wheels in motion.

The right people are the supervisors of your soil conservation district, your neighbors. Call one of them on the phone right now and tell him what's on your mind. He'll welcome your call and will explain how you can become a district cooperator. (If it's more convenient, stop at the office where the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) is headquartered. The folks there give technical help to the district and they can help you meet one of the supervisors.)

Step 2—Get Your Application In

Any organization, if it's efficient, has to have rules. One of the rules of your soil conservation district is that you must show an interest in the wise use of all your land if you expect to get their help. So show your district supervisor your intentions by signing a simple conserva-

tion agreement to work toward the kind of conservation program your land needs and establish the practices that are practical for you. The exact wording will vary according to the soil conservation district you live in, but the purpose is the same—to make you eligible to get the help

you need from trained conservationists of the SCS. These men are



assigned to your district by the Federal Government at the request of the supervisors. They spend most of their time working with farmers who have become district cooperators.

When your application has been accepted, you too will be a district cooperator. You'll have joined the most popular conservation fraternity in the world. Close to two million conservation landowners and operators in nearly 3,000 soil conservation districts got their start in exactly the same way.

Up to this point you won't have made any commitments about specific things you will or won't do on your land. You will make those decisions when you're ready for them.

Step 3—Build Up Your Conservation Know-How

Before you go very far you'll want to begin boning up on conservation. When the time comes for you to make your own long-range plans, you will want to be well informed. Then you'll be able to make good, workable decisions.

Your local soil conservationist will need some information too. He has worked on many farms and other properties, and he knows they're all different. He will be interested in your experiences, your desires, and the kind of land you work with.



The one thing you'll both need in order to develop a sound plan is a soil survey made by a soil scientist. As a soil conservation district cooperator you'll get a soil survey of your own land. From the survey, your conservationist will discuss with you the best use for each acre and indicate the hazards from erosion,

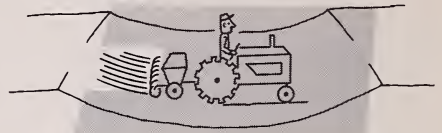
drought, poor drainage, and flooding. It may turn up opportunities you'd never know about otherwise, or it will verify what you already know about your soil.

While you're waiting for action on your request for a conservation plan, take a little action on your own. Go

to meetings and tours sponsored by your soil conservation district. Talk with other conservation farmers to get their ideas and the benefit of their experience. Do some extra reading. The soil conservationist and the county extension agent can give you some helpful bulletins.

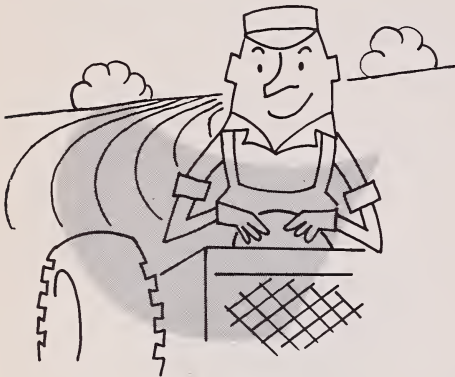
Step 4—Pick Out One or Two Practices You'd Like To Start With

It isn't necessary to wait until you have a complete blueprint before you begin conserving your soil. The SCS man will suggest some things you can do right away. You might change an unsightly gully into a grassed waterway; you might do a



little contouring in one of your crop fields; or you might test your soils for shortages of plant nutrients.

Keep in mind that anything you do must fit into the conservation plan you're going to work out later. The field boundary you change, the new fence you build, or the waterway you blade and seed should fit into your final plan. You'll want to work closely with the conservationist here—he can give you good suggestions on how your practices will work together so that you can best decide on those you want to do first.



Step 5—Get the Help You Need To Do the Practice Right

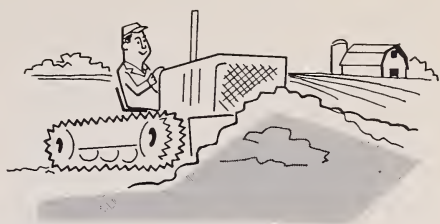
It's good to get a head start with your conservation farming. But you will want to be safe by avoiding mistakes that could bother you later on. So get the help you need from the Soil Conservation Service. As a district cooperator you are entitled to personal assistance right on your own land.

If you hire a contractor to do the work on these starting practices, SCS men will do the needed surveying and design. If it's a job you're doing yourself, they'll help you with unfamiliar details. Their recommendations are based on work with



farmers throughout the country, plus special research. Like you, they are interested in a permanent solution to your problems at the lowest possible cost.

There is a right time and place for every conservation practice. If you intend to put terraces in a field, for example, you will need a waterway that can handle the runoff water. If it's a grassed waterway you're after, build it at the time when it's easiest



to get grass started. The point is, talk it over with the conservationist—then do it right.

Step 6—Think About Other Things You'd Like To Do To Make Your Farm Safe and Productive

By now you've already had a good taste of soil and water conservation, and you may want to go right on and complete your conservation plan. It all depends on whether you have done enough thinking about your land's future to be able to discuss some of your special goals with the local soil conservationist. He wants to help you fulfill your own goals and wants to take into account your own likes and dislikes.

Before you take the next step, here are some good questions to ask yourself:

1. What soil and water conservation practices would give me the most benefit and make me the most profit?
2. What changes would I prefer to make in livestock if I need to use more forage in my conservation cropping system?
3. Would I be willing to rely on practices like terracing, strip-cropping, and minimum tillage in order to grow more high-profit crops?
4. What row crops do I want to grow? What hay and small grain crops?
5. What are some practices I can use to advantage? Improved pasture? Pond? Terraces? Trees? Wildlife plantings?

6. Do I have some land that is suited to recreation and would make money as a campsite or a hunting preserve?
7. Do I want a slow or quick changeover to a new program? Will the changeover pay its way?

There are lots of choices in soil and water conservation. If you choose wisely, you can get a program that fits you and your family as well as your land.



Step 7—*Make a Plan So You Can Do First Things First*

When you've taken the first six steps, you're ready to make your soil conservation plan. It doesn't matter how long it takes you to reach this step provided you are moving forward all the time. You can set your own pace. You've been preparing yourself for some important decisions. Now it's time to make them.

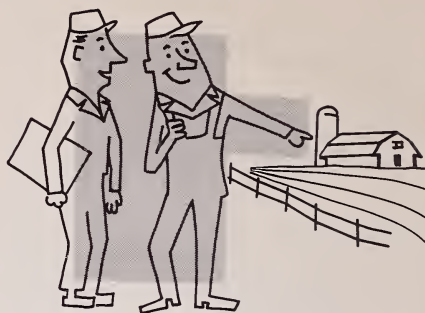
The usual procedure is something like this:

At a convenient time, you and the conservationist arrange to spend a day together on your land. Using your soil survey and land-capability map as a reference, you walk over the fields, look at the problems, discuss their solutions.

You have one main goal: to work out a conservation plan that you can follow regularly from year to year. To get this job done, you'll talk over every phase of what you're doing and what you plan to do on your land.

The soil conservationist will take pains to supply you with all the information you need to make sound decisions. He'll help you see opportunities to do things better, more easily, and more profitably.

As a rule, if your groundwork has been well laid, you and the SCS man

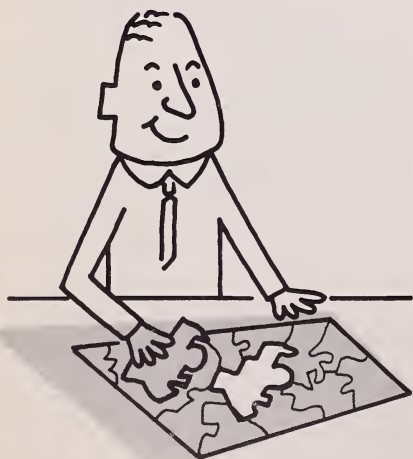


can combine your ideas and work out a sound plan in one day or less. If it takes longer, you can schedule another date. Some things you'll decide are:

1. How, in general, you intend to manage your land.
2. The best use of different areas—that is, for cropland, pasture, timber, wildlife, recreation.
3. Approximate size and location of fields.
4. Crops you will grow and the order in which they will follow one another.
5. Special conservation practices, including those for woodland and wildlife.
6. Livestock changes.
7. An orderly way to get your plan on the land.

There will probably be some details requiring measurements or surveys that you won't get settled right away. Examples are exact location of a contour-field boundary, the number of terraces needed in an irregularly sloping field, exact location of tile lines. But there will be no doubt in your mind about your having a definite conservation plan.

One of the puzzlers to those who haven't been through this planning process is how to change field boundaries and get one crop into each new field so everything will fit together.



Actually it's easy—and you don't need to worry, for example, about winding up with more hay than you know what to do with. The SCS man has been through this with scores of other farmers. He'll show you how it's done and help you get your own crops lined out.

Farming is something like a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces must fit together. When you bring soil conservation into the picture, it has to fit into the puzzle too. Improvements have to come gradually and there has to be some money coming in to pay for them. Your conservation plan must be flexible, allow for

substitutions, yet hold to certain standards.

How good your plan is depends mainly on you. You make the decisions. Don't fail to discuss any points with the conservationist that don't fit with your own conservation experience or your future plans. He would rather have you ask questions than take technical recommendations that don't suit. And if anything worries you, tell him about it. It's your land. You have to hire the extra help if it's needed. You have to make a living and educate your children. So put your ideas into the plan.

Step 8—Get the Plan on the Land—One Step at a Time

By the time you get a plan drawn up and ready to use, any mystery of how to carry out conservation will have disappeared. You will have learned how to do many conservation jobs yourself. You will know how to get help with projects that call for special equipment or training. Actually, you'll probably have most of your conservation plan in your head by this time, but you will still want to refer to the written plan for the built-in schedule and other details. It will also be an excellent guide to those helping you get practices on the land.

The schedule is important. If you're going to keep conservation easy, you have to do things in the proper order. If one thing is neglected, it may delay several other projects. Some delays are unavoidable, of course. For this reason the SCS man will depend on you to let him know when you need help.

As a general rule, you will do first those things that will bring in the extra income or will stop your most serious damages. For example, a harvest of wood in a neglected timber stand would be quick extra income.



Keeping floodwaters off cropland would put an end to heavy damages.

Beyond this, you will do first the things that make it easier to take the next step. For example, grassed waterways are among the first practices to work on when fields are washing badly. They carry the runoff water away safely and make a good outlet for terraces and contoured rows that will come later. So stick to your schedule all the way through and you'll have smoother sailing.

Conservation is easier now than it

would have been a few years back. That's because we're getting the benefit of research and experience all the time. Take terraces, for example. Those built years ago were narrow and peaked. Modern ones are so broad that they're just part of the field. Front and back slopes are flat and designed for wide equipment. Even better, you can now get many terraces parallel by doing a little cutting and filling during construction. Parallel terraces eliminate most short rows.

Get help from your SCS men when you have waterways to make, terraces to build, stripcropping to lay out, or anything else to do you aren't familiar with. See your county agent, too, about fertilizer recommendations, insect control, adapted crop varieties. Check with the county ASC committee to see what cost-sharing arrangements are provided if you need help with your new conservation practices. There may be others like the State conservation department and the Farmers Home Administration. All these people will be eager to help you get that plan of yours on the land.

If you follow your conservation



plan faithfully, doing what you can each year, one day you are bound to have it all on the land. Of course, soil conservation is a continuous process, and you'll have to maintain the practices that you've begun. But when your plan is complete, you will have your topsoil tied down. Your tailor-made program will be putting money in the bank and fertility in the ground. At the same time you'll marvel at the long way you and your farm have come in just a few years.

Prepared by Kent A. Alverson, *Soil Conservation Service*

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Growth Through Agricultural Progress

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